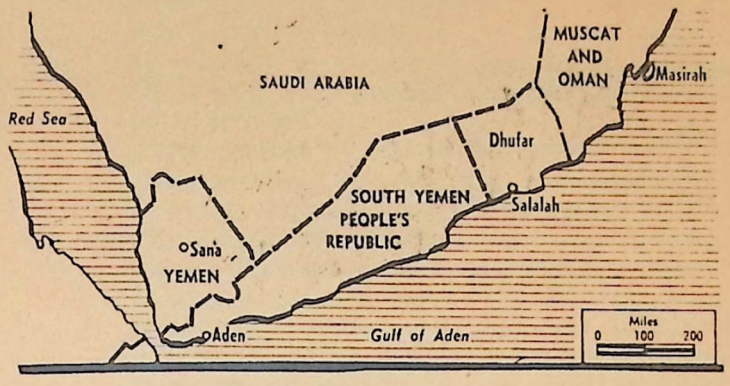
STRUGGLE IN DHOFAR



In order to check the eight-year old Dhofari revolution, Great Britain has lent the Sultan of Oman 70 officers and 100 "Blue Berets" (special paratroopers). They collaborate with a royal army that includes 7,000 Omanis, as well as mercenaries from Iran, India, Pakistan, and Somalia. London's military assistance to the Sultan Qabus is not based upon any military pact--only a vague commercial agreement signed in 1951.

The war costs Qabus at least 60 million dollars a year, or nearly half of the yearly revenues that he receives from Shell Oil and the Compagnie Francaise des Petroles. Recently, the guerrillas destroyed the irrigation canal that watered his palace gardens, causing all of his coconut trees to die.

Except during the monsoon season, Britains "Blue Berets" undertake frequent helicopter missions that are coordinated by the Royal Air Force base in Salalah, the capital of Dhofar. During the fall of 1971, they participated fully in "operation Jaguar," a large-scale campaign whose objective was to control the coastal plains all the way to Dhofar's border with the Democratic Republic of Yemen. At least 50 mercenaries, as well as three British officers, lost their lives in this operation, which has subsequently turned to be a failure.

L'INSTRUCTION DES JEUNES RECRUES.
Ni solde ni officiers.

During the monsoon season, the guerrillas of the Popular Front for the Liberation of the Occupied Arab Gulf took advantage of the terrain, which is similar to that of the Mekong Delta, and destroyed all the British installations that Operation Jaguar had established. Since May, General John Graham, sent by London to serve as Qabus' chief military advisor, has proposed a new set of tactics.

British forces have recently occupied Simba, a village on the border of the Democratic Republic of Yemen. Their goal is to interdict the guerillas' steady flow of supplies from South Yemen, which also permits the guerrillas to operate hospitals and training camps inside its borders. Similar "interdiction bases" were estanlished at Habrout, 50 miles inland from Simba, but, after twelve days, rocket barrages forced a withdrawal.

British advisors have sought to create a special force of deserters from the guerrillas' ranks, called the "Gamal Abdel Nasser" company. They have instructed these troops that it is their duty to defend Allah against the atheist PFLOAG.

Yet this tactic and others seem to no avail. On July 1, the guerrillas carried out a half-hour bombardment of the Royal Airforce Base at Salalah. Fearing that the guerrillas will step up activities after the monsoon season, British officers fear that PFLOAG may soon seek to open a new front in the "Green Mountain" area near the mouth of the Gulf. Acknowledging that the Sultan's army would collapse within days if a British withdrawal were ordered, the officers now predict that it would take "several years " even to reduce guerrilla activities to their pre-1970 level.

Adapted from article by Roger-Xavier Lanter for French newsweekly, L'Express (July 10, 1972)

PFLOAG on Fictitious Independence

(This text describes the deepening crisis in Bahrain and the maneuvers of the emir and his foreign mentors. It has been adapted from a document of the Popular Front for the Liberation of the Occupied Arab Gulf (PFLOAG), released in March, 1972. The full text has been published in Ninth June, a bulletin printed by the Supporters of the PFLOAG, Box 72 Station H, Montreal Quebec, Canada. We urge readers to send financial contributions to that address as an act of solidarity with PFLOAG's struggle).

We were not able yet to know the bullets which led to the deaths and injuries of tens of others among the workers and students or whether these bullets are of British or American origin. The incident took place after the British withdrawals and Bahrain's "declaration of independence" eight months ago. It followed by three months the notorious al-Gufeira agreement.**

Most recently, the provisional General Secretariat of the Worker's Federation of Bahrain, three days after the ninth anniversary of the events of March 9,1965, called upon Bahrain's workers to initiate a general strike and to participate in street processions in order to support the legitimate demands of technical workers for the formation of a union, higher wages, and lower food prices.

Independence has only made the puppet regime and its branches become more huge and fierce. With advice from British experts they used the street processions as a golden opportunity to arrest and imprison union leaders. On the following day, the regime ordered the army and the mercenary police to fire on the demonstrators. Tens of defenseless citizens who had come out into the streets with the idea that independence means freedom of expression were injured.

**--December 1971 agreement allowing the United States Navy to assume control of the former British base on Bahrain. This agreement has never been submitted to the U.S Congress for ratification.

These events occurred on the anniversary for commemorating the martyrs who fell on the battle-ground of honor while defending the rights of the people during and after March, 1965. The reactionary regime, with its tribal mentality, wanted to avenge itself upon the masses who have exposed it and revealed the truth on more than one occasion in the past seven years.

With the new wave of bloodshed by British intelligence and their stooges in Bahrain, they have made a full circle from 1965 to 1971 of deviousness and terrorism, having used the fake charade of independence, and promises of freedom. On March 13, 1972, they once again surprised us with a bloodbath.

The regime has used all types of cosmetics to try to cover its ugly face. Britain and the inventors of its strategy in the Gulf have tried to produce changes in the relationship between the regime and the masses, trying to subjugate the masses with terrorism,the whip, and the dinar. But the masses, endowed with revolutionary consciousness and long experience with the al-Khalifa family and British colonialism, are fully aware of these tricks and are looking for ways to expose them.

Throughout the past seven years, the regime has only been able to rely upon the lowest layer of the intelligentsia, who have become one of its tools for attacking the masses. In spite of all methods used by British colonialism and its intelligence agents, the gap between the masses and the rulers grew wider and wider.

During the past seven years, the colonialist authorities have tried the following new tactics:

They discovered that the wave of terror and repression inflicted upon the masses in March, 1965 could not continue if colonialism were to surrive in the Gulf area. They spread the rumor that those responsible for atrocities were interrlgence agents who had not known how to behave with the people and that these agents had been dismissed. Bob and Bin and

Abdel Hussein were thrown aside and replaced by Henderson, Paul. Higgs, and others* They allowed some "nationalists" to publish a newspaper and gave them much financial assistance. They tried to recruit many young people into the government corporations and to replace old directors with new ones. They gave some graduates a wage raise from 65 to 85 dinars and offered them responsible positions.

In 1967 they released many political prisoners and started to talk about the non-existence of political prisoners (They did not mention those arrested between 1965 and 1967). Yet all these reforms to deceive the masses. The Pakistani ambassador's announcement about Bahrain stirred up the masses again** The chauvinist game did not win any support. The masses' reply was "We know that our real enemies are the ones who are now colonizing us. Why talk about the Arabism of Bahrain? What about the present regime in Iran and its ties with colonialism?"

Meanwhile workers in the electricity, medical, and public works departments, along with other workers, started to condemn the government's policies and to attack the greedy merchants as well. They began to demand unions that would speak on their behalf and defend them against oppression by their employers.

While the stooges of the regime were dancing and beating the drums, workers were herded to interrogations and were imprisoned without trial. The police vehicles incircled the electricity department in huge numbers until the intelligence services decided that it was necessary to build a police station in this neighborhood if they were to have any chance of defeating the workers.

During the past two years, colonialist authorities have tried to persuade the masses that British withdrawal means that power is being handed over to nationalist elements, that Bahrain has won independence and that consolidation of this independence is the duty of every patriot.

*An apparent reference to British efforts to give the regime a new face by removing some individuals associated with the March 1965 slaughter.

**--Unfortunately, we are not familiar with the specific incident referred to here. Many Pakistanis live in Bahrain.

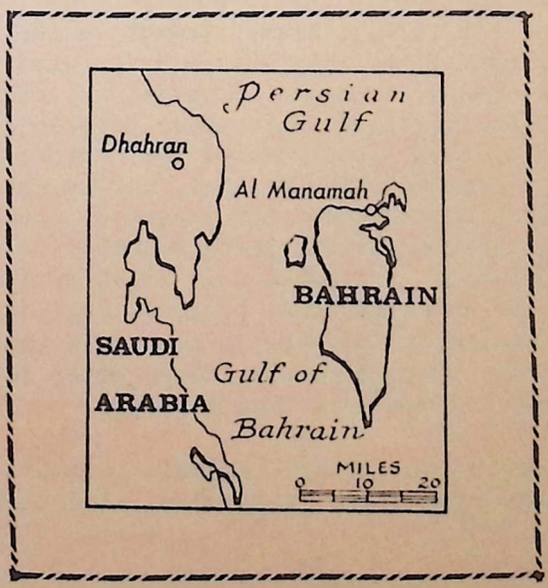
After the abortive federation conference, during which agents of the regime tried to implant a regional trend in this country the regime discovered that Bahrain is a special case and is different from other parts of the Gulf. So it has to win "independence," establish its state, and protect itself against colonialist greed. These fake appeals have only refreshed the dreams of the regime's lackeys who want to re-arrange their positions according to present-day circumstances. All this is Greek to the oppressed masses who understand these honeyed words as being only a justification for betrayal.

"The sun of British colonialism has departed from Bahrain," the puppets tell us, and talk has started about a constitution and elections and freedoms, all under the same ruler who crushed the masses in 1965.

Hired pens have written in the news-papers of Bahrain that these dreams will be realized by Issa al-Khalifa* and that the masses will be allowed to participate.

But the masses are making their own demands. Labor committees have drawn up a constitution for a worker's federation and collected thousands of signatures. From June last year until March, 1972, the Ministry of Labor has denied permission to create a worker's federation. During this period, the ministry has used threats and false promises. The intelligence services have arrested and interrogated the worker's leaders over and over. It has threatened them with death if they continue political activity.

*The present emir of Bahrain



More than once, saboteurs have been sent into labor movement so that intelligence can make false accusations and hunt for the bravest workers. Increased consciousness has foiled these subversive measures. The worker's leaders have realized the need to build a firm base and have spread their activities to the rural areas. They have formed labor committees in every neighborhood and village.

During the past two years, the colonialists in Bahrain have opened a wide gate for American and European capital. The mouthpieces of a "free economy" have tried to justify their flagrant treason by stressing the need of an open door for capital and peace and stability for these foreign companies.

Khalifa bin Salam, prime minister, told the workers taht their strikes will vanish like sand because foreign companies will be afraid to invest their capital in Bahrain. This sheik is the same one who announced in 1967 "we want Britain to keep her base in Bahrain so that we gain from it. If we ask for more rent, Britain will withdraw this base to some other Gulf emirate that would cherish the presenc e of foreign base on its lands."

Immediately after the withdrawal of Briti[illegible] forces, the sheik could not bold back his own greed. He started negotiations with the American master for renting al-Gufeira base. This clever merchant was able to convince the Americans that Bahrain is better than Qatar and Sharjah and so the base will remain in al-Gufeira

The leaves that cloaked the regime in Bahrain have blown away and it is clear that the regime despises the masses and it a tool of colonialism and Arab and Iranian reaction. Beyond doubt, the battle until the mass movement here became linked with the mass movements in Oman and elsewhere in the Gulf. National demands that leave the economy untouched cannot be realized under the regime of this rotten family that became rich by attacking peasants and looting their lands.* The genuine national movement comes from the masses of workers and their classical allies..The people of Bahrain cannot be tricked by the charades of false independence and empty constitutions. The colonialist plans that seem to be working in Qatar and Kuwait cannot win in this blazing island of Bahrain.

*reference to past history of the family of the emir of Bahrain.

Land Reform in Democratic Yemen

The former British colony of Aden, at the mouth of the Red Sea was characterized by an economic structure that typified the deformation of a peasant society by imperialism. While three-quarters of the population lived under tribal or feudal conditions in the country-side, the other quarter were concentrated in the city of Aden, depending mainly upon port activities and foreign trade. Indeed, a large portion of the city's population were Pakistanis, Iranians, Somalis, or Arabs who had migrated there under British colonial rule. One index of the "town/country" contradiction is that, before national independence, the peasantry, constituting an overwhelming majority of the population, generated only eight percent of the gross national product. Half of the colony's food supply had to be imported, and the average yearly income among the peasantry was less than $100.

Since the end of British rule in 1967, a number of dramatic steps have altered the lives of the peasantry. During the war for independence, many of the feudal lords, who openly supported the continuation of British rule, were forced to flee from the liberated areas, The archaic landlord/serf relationships were quickly destroyed by the National Liberation Front, which developed both peasant councils and a peasant militia.

At the same time, the victory of the independence struggle had meant the withdrawal of sums of foreign and local capital that were equivalent to nearly one-third of the gross national product. Most of the immigrant merchants and shopkeepers returned to their countries of origin. By 1969, Aden's port traffic, which had supplied seventy-five percent of the gross national product, dropped sharply. The small trade union movement in the city largely patterned after British trade unions, was deeply suspicious of the peasant-based N.L.F., which had assured itself state power by liquidating the "Arab socialist" wing of the independence movement.

n July, 1969, the N.L.F. government announced its intention to nationalize all foreign holdings, provoking a further withdrawal of foreign and local capital and a sudden wave of unemployment. Thus, the implementation of land reforms, called for by the Zinjibar Congress of the N.L.F. in 1968, was menaced by the vacuum which had resulted from the collapse of the colonial economy.

The November, 1969 law of land reform would face additional economic obstacles created by the Democratic Republic's lack of trade relations with most Arab nations and by a temporary withdrawal of Soviet aid. Yet the N.L.F.'s decision to carry out a mass mobilization of the peasantry would provide decisive advantages. Extending the peasant councils which had existed since the days of the independence struggle, the N.L.F. carried out a series of rapid confiscations of large plots and purged all rich and middle peasants from official posts in the rural areas. For the first time in the region's history, a survey of lands was carried out by the village councils, as well as a census of landless peasants and agricultural laborers.

In November, 1970 an even more advanced land reform law was submitted to the village councils for their approval. The new law would place even stricter limits upon acreage per person and would call for distribution of surplus land to the landless peasants and field laborers. Its implementation was handled by mass meetings at the village level--- which were open to all interested persons except the former holders of large plots of land.

June,1967:

Aden port workers stage militant protest against Israeli onslaught upon the Arab masses

To date, 87,000 feddans of land in Democratic Yemen have been redistributed among the peasantry. There are seventeen farming cooperatives with a membership of 1,000 apiece. Intense efforts to increase production and to build irrigation systems are likely to decrease the historic "town/country" contradiction that imperialism had exacerbated. Such steps are creating the material basis for an independent socialist economy that does not yet have any counterparts elsewhere in the Middle East.

Although the Democratic Republic of Yemen is severely menaced by the danger of imperialist attack and is hampered by its isolation within the Arab World, its land reforms are to be interpreted as a basic part of realizing the goals of the N.L.F. which were expressed in the Zinjibar Congress of 1968 as :

" to give all power to the people, more precisely by creating people's councils for the oppressed working class in each valley, village, and city, by excluding the bourgeoisie from our elections; by creating agricultural communes directly controlled by the peasants, industries which will be the property of the workers and will be run by the workers."

Sources--Rene Lefort, "South Yemen The Arab New Left Faces The Test" Le Monde Diplomatic, February 2, 1971
---M.Hatem Ali, "Land Reforms in Southern Yemen," World Marxist Review, February, 1972.